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INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Indochina

SUBJECT Reported Revolt Against the Viet Minh in the
Fifth Military Zone

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On 9 July 1949 Agence France Presse (AFP) quoted a Saigon Vietnamese language newspaper as saying that around the middle of June 1949 some Vietnamese nationalist troops revolted against the authority of Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh. The leader of the revolt was reported to be Cao Van Khanh, commander of the Fifth Military Zone. According to the dispatch the French authorities in Saigon were unable to confirm the report but stated that there was known to be a significant trend of opinion against the Viet Minh in that area.

1. The Viet Minh regime has divided the area of Annam into three military zones (Zones 4, 5, and 6). The Fourth Zone (northern Annam) is important as one of the strongest and largest Viet Minh controlled areas and as an advance defense for Tonkin. The Sixth Zone (south Annam) in which, however, the position of the Viet Minh is much weaker, plays a similar role for the Viet Minh defenses in Cochinchina. The Fifth Zone stretches between Quang Nam (158-50; 108-20) and Qui Nhon (13-50; 109-15). This zone is sometimes referred to as the "Quang Area" as there are a number of towns in it with names beginning with the syllable "Quang." This area contains a relatively narrow coastal plain which is the only rapid means of communication and transportation between the Fourth and Sixth Zones and, consequently, between Tonkin and Cochinchina. Although this region is largely self-sufficient in food, it is not of prime economic importance. Its real importance lies in its strategic position. The area also has a long history of revolutionary resistance almost comparable to that of the Fourth Zone, birthplace of Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap.

2.

at Hue which was conducted by the pro-Japanese Tran Trong Kim government. In August 1945, Cao Van Khanh enlisted as a private in the Viet Minh army. By November 1945 he had become a captain and in January 1946 he became a colonel and deputy commander of the Fifth Zone. In March 1946 the commander of the Fifth Zone, Nguyen Son, was transferred to the command of the Fourth Zone and Khanh succeeded him in command of the Fifth Zone.*

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3. Khanh is an extremely strong and dynamic character. He is popular with his troops and the local inhabitants. His hatred for the French was strengthened by the death of three of his greatest friends in battles against the French.
4. The news of Khanh's revolt was received in a curious fashion by the French. Unlike the defections of other nationalists (Bai Vien, Nam Lua, Tran Quang Vinh) which were heralded by the French and pro-French elements with a great deal of publicity and propaganda, this news was relegated to an inconspicuous place. It was not mentioned by Radio Saigon and was repeated by the French press only after it had appeared in the Saigon Vietnamese language press.
5. The first information received by the Viet Nam News Service in Bangkok regarding the reported revolt was the Reuters dispatch printed in the Bangkok Post on 9 July. The Viet Minh in Bangkok, including the Viet Nam Delegation and the chiefs of the Viet Nam News Service, were taken by surprise when they read the report. Not having received any instructions from the Ho Chi Minh government regarding the line of comment to adopt on the information, they refrained from mentioning it in their publications. Privately they admit that the Fifth Zone is very important and Cao Van Khanh is an extremely important leader. They also admit that, if the news of the revolt is accurate, it is an extremely dangerous situation for the Viet Minh. For the moment the Viet Nam News Service answers questions regarding the revolt by saying the story is probably an invention. However, the Viet Nam News Service radioed the Ho government for clarification of the report. Up to the present (12 July 1949) no reply has been received. The Ho government radio has made no mention of the reported revolt.

25X1A [REDACTED] Comment. Nothing is known concerning his military or political activities from that date until the recent report of rebellion. However, since he remained in command of the Fifth Zone, it seems probable that he did nothing to seriously alienate the Viet Minh leadership during that period.

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